

people was preparing to dispute it arms in hand. Unlike the German peasantry of the Reformation age, who, as we have seen, hated priest and monk and attacked monasteries as well as castles, the peasants were ready to rise in their thousands, not only to protest against social abuses but to avenge the pope and the monks. What these abuses were we have already learned from "Utopia." The chronic dearth of labour and the demand for English wool by the home and foreign manufacturer had depressed agriculture, and increasingly developed sheep farming. The owners of the soil turned a large part of it into sheep pastures, ejected the small farmer for this purpose, and seized and enclosed the common lands for their own use. The landowner might be acting for his own interest in accordance with the laws of political economy, but his action involved hardship and injustice to the masses. Of the hardship there is no question, even if we had no Utopia to bear witness to it. "Among the causes of the insurrection," testified one of the prisoners captured after the coming revolt, "were pulling down of villages and farms, raising of rents, enclosures, intakes of the commons, worshipful men taking yeomen's offices, that is, becoming dealers in farm produce." The same complaint is heard in a characteristic petition of the time to the king. "By reason of so many farms engrossed in one man's hands, which cannot till them, the ploughs be decayed, and the farmhouses and other dwelling-houses, so that when there was in a town twenty or thirty dwelling-houses, they be now decayed, ploughs and all the people clean gone, and the churches down, and no more parishioners in many parishes but a neat-herd and a shepherd instead of three score or four score persons."

These things roused the anger of the people, but the people had more reason to be angry with the local lords and gentry than with the Government, which had vainly re-enacted the statutes against enclosures. The lords and gentry, however, had their own grievances. They resented the heavy taxation granted by a servile and packed Parliament. They resented still more bitterly the rise of the new nobility and the royal patronage of newcomers like Cromwell, who robbed them of their supremacy in government and Parliament. They felt aggrieved by the Statute of Uses, which regulated